

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:

Claims 1 – 21 (cancelled)

Claim 22 (withdrawn)

Claim 23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (withdrawn)

Claim 25 (cancelled)

Claim 26 (withdrawn)

Claims 27 – 28 (cancelled)

29. [currently amended] ~~In combination:~~ An angled gripping joint combination for support structures, comprising:

(a) a U-beam top joint, comprising:

(i) a side U-beam having a first surface;

(ii) a side bracket beam; and

(iii) a pair of spaced inward facing lumber leg support surfaces joining the side U-beam and side bracket beam together, each inward facing lumber leg support surface dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between the support surface, the side U-beam and the side bracket beam and positioned at a predetermined angle with respect to the first surface; and

(b) a U-beam splay bar, comprising:

(i) a pair of opposed outward facing lumber leg guiding surfaces; and

(ii) a connecting member extending longitudinally between the lumber leg guiding surfaces and connecting them together, the outwardly facing lumber leg guiding surfaces positioned at the pre-determined angle with respect to the longitudinal axis of the connecting member;

wherein a pair of lumber legs may be positioned between respective inward facing lumber leg support surfaces and between the side U-beam and side bracket beam of the U-beam top joint and adjacent the outward facing lumber leg guiding surfaces of the U-beam splay bar so that first ends of the lumber legs adjacent the U-beam top joint are forced toward each other when the U-beam splay bar is moved in the direction of the U-

beam top joint to force the lumber legs to pivot about the inward facing lumber leg support surfaces.

30. [previously added] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the side U-beam of the U-beam top joint.

31. [previously added] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the U-beam splay bar.

32. [previously added] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the side U-beam of the U-beam top joint and side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the U-beam splay bar.

33. [previously added] The combination of claim 29 further comprising a pair of spaced opposed flanks extending outwardly from each guiding surface in parallel alignment, each pair of flanks and respective guiding surfaces dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between respective flanks and the guiding surface.

34. [previously added] The combination of Claim 33 wherein each flank extends in a perpendicular direction with respect to the outward facing lumber leg guiding surface.

35. [previously added] The combination of Claim 33 in which the flanks include holes through which a nail may be inserted into a lumber leg.

36. [previously added] The combination of claim 29 wherein a lumber top member is interposed between the lumber leg first ends and the first ends of the lumber legs apply pressure against the lumber top member when the U-beam splay bar is moved toward the U-beam top joint.

37. [previously added] The combination of Claim 29 wherein the U-beam top joint further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the side U-beam.

38. [previously added] The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the side bracket beam.

39. [previously added] The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the side U-beam.

40. [previously added] The combination of Claim 29 wherein the U-beam splay bar further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the U-beam splay bar.